



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Fewest gypsy moths in 23 years trapped in Washington; none in Vader or Crown Hill

OLYMPIA – State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) field trappers caught 17 gypsy moths during the 2002 trapping program, the lowest number since 23 years ago when only three moths were caught.

Seven of the gypsy moths were caught in King County, six in Whatcom County, and one each in Clark, Kitsap, Lewis, and Pierce counties. None of the moths caught were trapped in either the Vader area in Lewis County or the Crown Hill neighborhood of Seattle. These were the two sites sprayed with a biological insecticide last spring.

WSDA staff is inspecting the two locations where the majority of moths were caught for additional evidence of gypsy moth presence. If further evidence is located, and it's concluded that a reproducing population is present, efforts to eliminate the infestation may be taken in those areas next spring.

The 17 moths have been sent to a U.S. Department of Agriculture lab in Massachusetts for DNA analysis to determine whether they are of the European or Asian variety. Results will be announced when they are received, probably late November. Asian gypsy moth is a much greater threat to Washington because it attacks both evergreen and deciduous (leaf bearing) trees, and its female can fly up to 20 miles after being mated.

John Townsend, trapping coordinator for WSDA, was pleased with the low number of moths detected this year. "Our hope each summer is to immediately detect any beginning infestations," Townsend said. "That provides the best chance of preventing the establishment of gypsy moth in Washington."

More than 250 traps were placed in the Crown Hill neighborhood and more than 1,300 were placed in and around Vader in June. A comparable level of trapping will occur next summer in these two areas. "If we catch no moths in Vader and Crown Hill next summer, we will declare the 2002 spraying a success," Townsend said.

The state's annual trapping program begins in June and ends in September. During that period, Townsend's trappers place 18,000-20,000 small cardboard traps in the field and check them every two-to-three weeks.

For more information, call WSDA at (800) 443-6684 or visit the Web site at <http://www.wa.gov/agr/default.htm> and click on "Gypsy Moth."

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